

EXCOMMUNICATION



MORMONISM AND HOMOSEXUALITY

BY
STEVEN OGDEN

"EXCOMMUNICATION"

Mormonism and Homosexuality

For purposes of providing a more comprehensive insight into these correspondences, and in consideration of those doctrinal concepts of the Mormon Church which are discussed within the texts of these letters, I have written this brief introduction, with personal testimony concerning my own experiences with homosexuality while under the doctrinal and policy constraints of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Contrary to a belief held by many, Mormons are indeed Christians. They honor and revere the Holy Bible, believe that Jesus Christ is the head of their Church, and makes his will known directly through his appointed mouthpiece on Earth, known the Mormon Prophet, or President of the Church. Although Mormonism declares Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, the Mormon religion thereafter quickly differentiates itself from other Christian religions, both in doctrines and practices.

Mormonism began with its founder, Joseph Smith, in 1830, when he claimed he had received a vision wherein God the Father, and Jesus Christ, told Joseph that he was chosen to restore the true church of Christ to the earth. Mormons believe that after the great apostasy (when all apostles from the original followers of Christ had died), the authority to act in the name of God (the priesthood), and Christ's Church, ceased to exist. Therefore, Joseph Smith, by "*divine*" appointment, became the first Prophet of the "*latter-day*", receiving his authority, the priesthood, directly from the Apostles Peter, James and John whom Christ had ordained to his ministry himself while on the earth. Of course, there were many of these "*visions*" and "*revelations*" experienced by Joseph Smith, resulting in several books revered by the Mormons as absolute scripture.

These books are the **Book of Mormon**, **The Doctrine & Covenants** and **The Pearl of Great Price**.

Joseph Smith secured a large following of faithful and believing saints, much like the other religious preachers who zealously pursued congregations who would follow their interpretations of the **Bible** with financial support. Indeed, to be a church founder was, at that time in **American history**, considered an acceptable and common endeavor.

Utilizing the **Bible** and the **Book of Mormon**, a record Joseph Smith claimed to have received from an angel named **Moroni**, had translated from gold plates whereon a recorded history of the inhabitants of **North America** from **600 BC** to approximately **400 AD** was inscribed. **Mormon** was one of last the prophets to make an entry of his history in this book. As **Mormon** had compiled all of the other recorded words of previous prophets who lived before him, Joseph called it, “**The Book of Mormon**.” This book remains the cornerstone of the **Church**, upon which hinges in its entirety, the doctrines and principles taught in the **Church**. The general admonition given by missionaries for the **Church**, to read and pray about the truthfulness of the **Book of Mormon** eventually obligates the reader to comply with all doctrines and guidelines of the **Mormon Church** by virtue of the readers own acceptance of the **Book of Mormon** as viable scripture. Considering the language and cadence of the book, which virtually mimics biblical language and cadence, it is quite reasonable to one who is unknowledgeable about the finer doctrines taught in the **Church** to assume it must be true because it reads like the bible.

The general structure of the **Mormon Church** is an extremely detailed organization based upon corporate structures found in many successful corporate businesses today. The all-male authority flow chart, or **Priesthood lineage**, begins with the **Prophet** and his two “*vice-presidents*”, known as **Counselors**. They govern twelve other men, sitting upon a literal **Board of Directors** for the **Church**, called the **Quorum of the**

Twelve Apostles. Under their direction, serve seventy district managers, called **Regional Representatives**, who are assigned to administer within a specific geographical region of the world. These **Regional Representatives** are more commonly known in the Church as **The Quorum of the Seventy**. Underneath these representatives are **Stake Presidents** and two counselors; a **High Council** consisting of twelve men, and several **Bishops** and their respective two **Bishop's Counselors**, who govern congregations referred to as "*Wards*," also determined geographically, comprised of members numbering from several hundred to even one thousand.

There are several various **Sunday school** classes, attendance being determined by age and sex, for every church member, from the age of three through sixteen years. Initially, boys and girls jointly congregate for what is called **Primary**, followed by some gender mixed and gender separated classes, wherein **Mormon** doctrines are taught, tailor-written according to age and sex. All materials used in the Church are carefully written and must first be approved by the **First Presidency**; otherwise it is not considered scripture. Any documents which bear the copyright of the **First Presidency**, is considered as if **God** himself wrote it. Most children are baptized by full immersion at age eight, because it is believed that by this age, children can sufficiently comprehend and demonstrate their knowledge of that which is right and that which is wrong.

Mormons consider the words of any **Mormon Prophet**, written or spoken, past or present, to be the word of **God** -- scripture as viable as any found in the **Bible**. Records of doctrinal dissertations by various apostles and prophets of the Church are compiled in what is known as the **Church History**, and can also be found in various church publications. These dissertations are also integrated into church teaching materials and guidelines, as well as church policy and governing laws.

Mormon policy concerning homosexuality began in 1975, under the leadership and direction of **Church President** and appointed **Prophet**,

named Spencer W. Kimball, when he wrote, "The Miracle of Forgiveness". In this publication, he addressed the subject out of a discovery of an almost total absence of scriptural reference to homosexuality. Indeed, the word "*homosexual*" wasn't created until 1903, and is an incorrect English translation of the Hebrew term for what was male prostitution and in no way shares any similarity to what we in modern times would consider a homosexual relationship, by and between two committed men or women who wish to spend their lives together. Such human relationships are essential to becoming a fulfilled and healthy human being; the benefits of which are not exclusively intended for heterosexual couples.

In considering the subject of homosexuality, Jesus Christ uttered not a word, nor ever referred to it, nor did Mormon Church founder, Joseph Smith. The only scriptural references that exist are found in the Bible, and in only seven places; each of which can easily be dismissed as referring to the common practice of the time by Greeks and Romans who solicited themselves as prostitutes.

Mistakenly, biblical scholars forget to consider the context and historical circumstances surrounding these references to Homosexuality, and carefully eliminate essential factors necessary in understanding these scriptural texts appropriately.

Mormons believe that one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, known as the Celestial Kingdom, without entering the sacred covenant of marriage to one of the opposite sex, through the Temple ceremonies. Therefore, homosexuality is not congruent with these requirements for eternal salvation. Mormons perceive homosexuality as merely a physical, sexual act between persons of the same gender. They do not believe one can achieve any type of fulfilling sense of completeness as a human being within the structure of a homosexual relationship. Mormons believe it is a conscious choice, an unnatural act, similar to sadomasochism, adultery,

abortion, even murder. Individual masturbation is also considered an evil practice, which the Church teaches can carefully lead to homosexual acts.

In terms of punishment, however, it is a considerably less painful repentance process for homosexual acts, than for heterosexual acts between unmarried persons. Socially, behavior incongruent to doctrines of the Church eventually becomes common knowledge to congregational members and gossip heavily infiltrates the social structure of the church, introducing extreme ostracism through socialized shame directed towards the offending individual.

I grew up with my Father serving as a Stake President for over sixteen years of my life. There is a degree of exclusivity and privilege given to the family of any church leader, especially those of a Stake President. Our family was considered upper-middle class. My Father drove a Mercedes-Benz since I was six; we frequently traveled, went snow skiing in Utah, water skiing in our boat at Lake Tahoe, and truly wanted for nothing materially.

I was adopted, as was my older sister, into a Mormon family while very young. I was brought up to believe in the Mormon doctrines and follow church policy regarding moral and spiritual issues. It is the policy of the Mormon Church concerning homosexuality that caused me the greatest degree of difficulty throughout my life in the church. I was taught in Sunday school classes that I would begin to experience attractions towards members of the opposite sex, and that I should control myself and honor and respect the virtue of young women, abstaining from sexual intercourse until marriage.

As each year would pass, I began to realize that these feelings of attraction and sexual desire were for those members of my own sex, not the opposite sex. I continued to pursue dating girls in the church, yearning for any sign of sexual interest, yet I found only disappointment

and discouragement. I read stories of Prophets who had said that they would rather their sons, "*...be dead than homosexual,*" and that they would sooner see their sons, "*...come home in a coffin than be gay.*" Words like these deeply affected my sense of self-worth, causing me to question whether God was capable of unconditionally loving me, in spite of the ever-looming dark cloud of sin and guilt which accompanied me throughout my young life.

I ridiculed and punished myself for the affections inside of me, voraciously pursuing a more righteous path through constant bible study and church service which I believed would eventually propagate my heterosexuality. I decided to serve as a full-time missionary in a last-ditch effort appeal to the Lord to change my sexual desires. I believed whole-heartedly that as I faithfully served a full and complete mission, the Lord might see fit to reward my works and dedication with the eradication of my homosexuality.

I considered surgical procedures, medical therapy, sought psychiatric help and pursued every possible means to end the war within me which quickly deteriorated my self-image, self-worth and will to live with such a handicap --this disability as I had come to consider it; and that which I had to overcome.

It is through these correspondences with the First Presidency of the Church that I began to confront not only my inner fears, but the very foundation of the Church policy on homosexuality, so that I could find peace and reconciliation between Me and my Higher Power -- whether it was the same god Mormons worshipped or not.

Steven R. Ogden-Trier

QUOTES OF MORMON LEADERS CONCERNING HOMOSEXUALITY & RACE DISCRIMINATION

Q: "Mr. Smith, who founded the Roman Catholic Church?"

A: "The Devil," replied Joseph Smith

[Source: Joseph Smith, Prophet/Founder of the Mormon Church; Excerpt from Elder's Journal, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp 59-80]

"I would rather my son be dead than homosexual."

[Source: Brigham Young, Mormon Prophet. History of the Church Volumes]

"Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings is concerned."

[Source: "Mormon Doctrine", by Bruce R. McConkie, Apostle of the Mormon Church]

Q: "What is the position of your church with respect to slavery?"

A: "We consider it a divine institution and not to be abolished."

[Source: Brigham Young, Mormon Prophet. New York Tribune interview with Horace Greeley, Editor, July 13, 1891]

"Men will be sealed to men in a more solemn ordinance than that by which women are sealed to men."

[Source: Brigham Young, Mormon Prophet. History of the Church Volumes]

INTRODUCTION

In the pages that follow, you will read correspondence I have received and sent to various Mormon Church Authorities discussing the Church's immoral, unethical and unfounded policy on homosexuality.

My initial desire was to create a spirit of discussion wherein, I, and those with whom I corresponded could expose the purposes, reasoning and foundation behind the creation and adoption of this outrageous policy.

Unfortunately, the Church Authorities were much less than eager to discuss the issue, beyond perpetual reaffirmations of their prepared outlines on the policy. It became obvious, over the course of our correspondence, that they purported Christ like concern for my well-being, however it became increasingly obvious that they contorted my views to fit their purposes thereby evading honest and Christ like discussion.

I found several significant contradictions (outlined in the correspondence) which, when repeatedly presented to the Church Authorities, remained suspiciously unaddressed. This lead me to believe that the Church Authorities are severely perplexed over the issue of homosexuality and are equipped with neither the education nor Christ like inspiration to adequately and humanly deal with homosexuality within and without the Church. As my continual bombardment of information and statistics began to wear on them, they became equally less vocal and less conscionable of their creatively tailored responses.

In conclusion, it will serve the reader well to carefully examine the construction of the letters from the Church Authorities in comparison to my own. The reader will find that the Church Authorities avoid

vehemence and voracity, where I chose such tones to express my sincere rage and disgust with their diabolical doctrines. What should be noted carefully is that the Church Authorities continually defended themselves with a clever smokescreen of "*love and compassion*" for me as a "*lost soul*". Yet as we progressed towards the completion of my excommunication process and our correspondence, that same smokescreen quickly dissipated into an obvious manipulation and contortion of Christian ethics. As well it exposed the contradistinction of their "*Christian concern*"^N and my subsequent excommunication.

The Mormon Church experience is one that is unique. This is especially unique when the individual member is homosexual. I wrote and compiled this correspondence in the hopes that eyes may be opened to the astounding and horrifying truth of homosexual youth and adult suicide in direct correlation with the Mormon Church Policy on Homosexuality. The blood of these innocent children of God will ever stain the "holy garments" of these men who perpetuate their unfounded homophobic, unrealistic and wholly inhuman doctrines on homosexuality.

I urge the 800,000 Gay and Lesbian members of the Mormon Church to come forward and examine more closely the unethical and ungodly Gospel the Mormon Church leaders profess is of Christ. That neither Christ nor the founder of the Mormon Church in these latter days, Joseph Smith, ever addressed by spoken, written or revealed word the legitimate and God-created human orientation of homosexuality, irrefutably connotes the verity of such damnable practices and professions of the leaders of the Mormon Church.

I sincerely urge the reader to explore further the atrocities these Brethren have committed with respect to their anti-homosexual and anti-bisexual policies with their subsequent tortures, threats and punishments exacted from individuals with these wonderful and viable orientations. I know by

my research, life-long involvement with the Church and by virtue of the fact that my own Father is a well-respected Church Leader that the facts I have herein included are true and sustainable.

The Church would have the reader believe that I have been "*carefully led by Satan^m*" and have "*fallen into the pit of despair*" by virtue of conducting this research and engaging in such correspondences. I believe there is a Higher Power, but it dwells within each of us and I call it the Universe, because I cannot emotionally abide the use of terms like "God". We are perfect as we have been born, and homosexuality is no more a choice than someone being born Black, Asian or anything else. The Christ like charity the Mormon Church purports to exude has been exposed as indifference, ostracism, misogyny and homophobia through their own words, recorded in the letters they sent me, which are a part of this book. The truth indeed shall make you free, and the irony found in the engraving found upon Mormon temples so compelling, which reads, "The glory of God is Intelligence."

However, I propose that one can have all of the intelligence the universe could offer us. Without the application of that intelligence through our own personal experience, we will never attain glory far greater than intelligence - Wisdom.

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President, San Francisco California Stake

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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Merrill F. Higham
Stake President
San Francisco California Stake

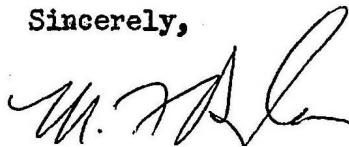
29 December, 1991

Dear Brother Ogden:

This is to advise that a Stake Disciplinary Council will be held at 9:00am, Sunday January 5, 1992, in the High Council Room at the San Francisco California Stake Center, 975 Sneath Lane San Bruno, California. At this council, formal disciplinary action against you, including the possibility of disfellowshipment or excommunication, will be considered because you are reported to have been guilty of transgression of the moral code of the Church.

You are invited to attend this disciplinary council to give your response, and, if you wish, to provide witnesses or other evidence in your behalf. In the event of your absence, the decision of the council will be based on the evidence presented, and the established procedure of the church.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M. F. Higham', written in a cursive style.

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Merrill F. Higham
Stake President
San Francisco California Stake

January 27, 1992

Dear Brother Ogden:

Pursuant to our telephone conversation and to the letter I sent you dated December 29, 1991, the San Francisco Stake Presidency and High Council held a disciplinary council on 5 January 1992 to consider certain allegations concerning your conduct as a member of the Church and as an endowed Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

We regret that you were not present in person; however, evidence available was carefully considered. We concluded that your conduct is contrary to the laws and order of The Church. Accordingly, this letter will serve as official notification of disfellowshipment from the Church effective 5 January 1992.

Steve, please be aware that while in this status you are welcome to attend church meetings, but you may not give a talk, offer a public prayer, partake of the sacrament, or vote in the sustaining of Church officers. Further, you may not hold a temple recommend, serve in a Church position, or exercise the priesthood in any way. We do, however, encourage you to pay tithes and offerings, and seek a return to fellowship in the Church through sincere repentance and righteous living.

Brother Ogden, the council has set a time limit of one year for this disfellowshipment. At the end of this period it will reconvene to review your status. We truly hope you will see this action as an opportunity to

put your life back into conformity with Heavenly Father's commandments during this period. The brethren of the Stake Presidency and High Council extend their love to you and sincerely invite you to return to full fellowship.

Kindest regards,



Merrill F. Higham
STAKE PRESIDENT

If you would like to discuss this with me personally, I would be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

February 10, 1992

The First Presidency
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Church Office Building
47 E. South Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

Dear Brethren:

I write you out of a sincere desire to inform you of my feelings concerning my disfellowshipment as of January 5, 1992.

My Father is President Reed W. Ogden, of the Santa Rosa California Stake of the Church. He is a good man and a proficient leader in both the Church community and the business community. I served a full-time mission for the Church from 1987 to 1989 in British Columbia and Los Angeles, where after much difficulty I departed with honor as a District Leader. I am grateful for my missionary endeavors for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ which it gave me.

I have strived to serve the Lord all of my days. However, since my birth I have known that I was different than all of the other boys. I knew I was gay, but I could not have labeled it as such previous to my understanding of sexuality, nor could I have accepted such a label until at least two years ago. All of the Bishops that I have dealt with concerning this situation have been supportive and yet rather evasive of the issue, I believe out of ignorance on the subject. Certainly when I would have encounters with other boys my age in the Priesthood

Quorums my Bishop would advise me to repent and to abstain from the Sacrament for a period of time.

As much as I despised myself for having these persistent feelings; as much as I flogged myself emotionally in repentance for such feelings; and truly as much as I bore my entire soul to my Savior, begging for the expulsion of this "*sin*", yet these feelings did not cease. I felt that serving a mission would cleanse me, as I worked diligently to this end. I felt the Lord would help me become "*normal*".

It isn't a lack for beautiful women in my life. Indeed quite the opposite. I sought to love and to be sexually attracted to each one, thinking somehow each in their way would change me. I was always proud to know that I had not taken the virtue of any of the Lord's daughters away, but had fought for it. Indeed to this day I have remained pure in this sense I've had feelings, though in vain, that perhaps had I so indulged sexually with a girl, perhaps I might have been "changed". I do not believe that the Lord would agree neither do I believe that such action would create this change.

I have seen many, many LDS Social Services psychologists and counselors. In addition, my Father has poured literally thousands of dollars into the pockets of other noted psychiatrists to help me. Always these doctors and counselors found that I was healthy; indeed they suggested my parents seek psychiatry because of the dysfunction in our family. One particular psychiatrist I had the distinct pleasure of knowing was in Sister Vallota, whom I met while on my mission in Los Angeles. She wanted for me to be happy with whom I was and impressed upon me that until I accepted myself, for whatever I was, I would not be happy.

Following my mission, as my problem became more poignant, I held many conferences with my Bishop. During one particular session with

him, he asked me to call Sister Vallota. He spoke with her concerning my health and stability so that he could be of more assistance. Afterwards, she told me that I should accept my feelings; that I should accept my gayness instead of running away from it. It was clear that I continued to resort back to homosexual activities anyway and that this back and forth repentance was not helping me emotionally.

I told her that above all, I did not want to go to hell. I truly felt that by accepting myself as gay, I would damn myself. That by such Satan somehow was "*carefully leading*" me there. She told me that I must decide on my own and that I had mistakenly shaped my life through a series of justifications by others. I realized she was right. Upon returning to my residence, I prayed fervently, inquiring of the Lord for the answer to my dilemma. I told the Lord I wished to accept myself for whatever I was and for whatever he had made me to be, either straight or gay.

Shortly thereafter, an LDS family with whom I had become very close to since the death of their Son, (a good friend of mine), suggested that I speak with one of their friends, named Arthur. He offered his support for whatever decision would make me the happiest, either straight or gay. I knew that he was sincere and would not base his opinions and suggestions on the fact that he was gay. He invited me to brunch in San Francisco with his husband, Ron and there I met many wonderful and supportive people who cared about my decision and my happiness.

This is not to say that they cared about me because they wished me to embrace homosexuality, but that they truly cared about my wholeness as a person and ultimately my emotional well-being. This was very new to me. To be supported in making either decision; gay or straight. Before this time I had always experienced a tainted or bias viewpoint which caused me to become indecisive and confused. My answer came as if someone had spoken the words to me, "Accept you as I have made you."

I knew this was right. I knew that I must accept myself as a gay man. Interestingly as I did so, events began to unfold which paved the way for success in my life that I had not experienced before. Soon after this answer, I began looking at life very differently, more positively. I prayed more often and with more intent. During this personal crisis I had become unemployed. I lived with a family in the Santa Rosa First Ward. I enjoyed having many meaningful conversations with the wife and I soon told her that I desired to move to San Francisco to find work and to find myself.

At one of the brunches with Ron and Arthur, I made acquaintance with a man named James who sought to help me find employment. With his help I interviewed with a friend of his at the law firm I presently work for. I moved in with Ron and Arthur and lived with them for a month while I saved money to move out. Because of the inconvenience however I moved into another friends' home for another month until I finally moved into my own apartment. The series of events which surround this "coming out" and "discovery of self" process are miraculous to say the least. It seems that at every turn when I needed help, someone was there to assist me without expectation for reciprocation.

I wish to add that until this time, I had never been able to hold employment longer than 4 months. I now have been with for over a year. I know that the stability I presently enjoy comes from knowing and accepting who I am. I can now more clearly see the goals for my life and how to achieve them. I enjoy more fulfilling relationships with my family and friends. I value the morals and standards the Church taught me since youth more than I ever have. All of this is most significant to me and reaffirms my decision.

I began to study some literature which has been written on Mormonism and Homosexuality which is very positive and does not degrade or demoralize the Church and its teachings.

I have much respect for one particular publication entitled, "Peculiar People—Mormons and Same-Sex Orientation", written by three professors from the University of Utah. It is a series of compiled personal accounts by Fathers, Mothers and homosexuals themselves concerning this perplexing issue. This has been a great strength to me.

I have become rather discouraged that the Church offers nothing better than celibacy to gays and lesbians. In fact I am rather surprised by it for the reason that it is, according to our teachings, a heretical institution devised by the Catholic Church and an abomination because of its inherent anti-procreative charter. By this and by the actions and words of others within the leadership of the Church I am puzzled and dismayed. I am sorry that there cannot be more comprehensive and realistic research into this subject so as to provide charitable and humane revisions to present procedures enacted by the Church government. I do not foolishly hope that this letter will by any means cause you to consider such changes. I merely hope that my voice will be added to the other 800,000 gay and lesbian members of the Church, who suffer, endure disfellowshipment and excommunication and even commit suicide needlessly.

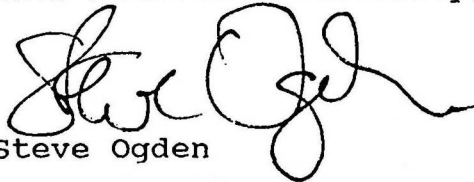
We are taught from birth that accepting others for who they are, and loving them unconditionally is that which Christ would have us do, and by supreme example did. Why then do contradictions to such teachings reign supreme? Why don't "Know Your Religion" instructors teach about the real interpretations of Sodom and Gomorrah as it really happened? I find this discouraging and especially unbecoming of the Lord's Church. I understand that you will perceive these feelings to be held by someone who is misled and deceived by the craftiness and cunning of men. Please know that I speak with all sincerity of heart. I simply cannot ignore that Christ never spoke nor made reference to homosexuality during his all-encompassing ministry on Earth, and neither did Joseph Smith.

Realizing that I am not new to the confrontations made to the Church government on the subject, I only seek to contribute my voice to the many who cry out for love and understanding. I cannot accept that the sincere desire for companionship with the same sex is of the devil, or that it is condemned by the Lord. Good relationships promote growth, and growth is of God.

I hope that you will help me to understand what the Church considers to be the answers to these questions. I do not wish to lie by pretending to want to change my sexual orientation. I am proud of how I was created and I will continue to live as honorable a life as I can. I look forward to the day this divisive policy against homosexuality will be withdrawn.

Thank you for your consideration.

With heartfelt sincerity,



Steve Ogden

SRO:s

LDS Social Services

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

February 27, 1992

Dear Brother Ogden,

The Office of the First Presidency has asked that I respond to your letter. Thank you for sharing with us some of the challenges you have experienced with homosexuality. We recognize how hard the struggles are and that the solutions are not easy.

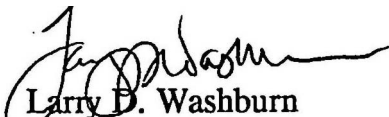
You are to be commended for your commitment to the Gospel, your faithful Church service, and your honorable mission. Your letter indicates you value your Church affiliation and that the Gospel continues to have meaning in your life. As you know, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of hope and success. We are happy you have found satisfaction in your employment and that it has contributed to stability for you.

We are concerned about those with homosexual difficulties, and we are convinced that there is hope for those who accurately understand the homosexual condition and want to make changes in their lives. We are seeing many whose lives are changed, and who experience the healing influence of the Gospel. In addition to hope, they have found understanding, compassion and fellowship. We are grateful for people both within and outside the Church who reach out to those with problems.

We commend those who strive to overcome homosexual thoughts and feelings and to eliminate homosexual behaviors. Even though you have done so before, we invite you to contact the nearest **LDS Social Services** agency for additional information or I would be happy to talk with you further.

May God bless you in your search to understand how homosexuality can be changed, and how it can be done in the Lord's way.

Sincerely,



Larry D. Washburn
Special Assistant

Enclosure

QUOTES FROM PROFESSIONALS REGARDING HOMOSEXUALITY

"As a result of treatment, many men have been supported in their desired commitment to celibacy, while others have been able to progress to the goal of heterosexual marriage. The psychological profession has a responsibility to continue to explore the cause, nature and treatment of homosexuality. I do not believe that the gay life-style can be healthy, nor that the homosexual identity *can* ever be completely ego-syntonic. It (reparative therapy) acknowledges the significance of gender difference, the worth of family and conventional values, and the importance of prevention of gender confusion in children."

Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D. (1991).
Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality
Preface, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc.

Dr. Nicolosi is a practicing clinical psychologist who has had significant experience in working with those struggling with homosexuality.

"...it is striking that if the patients are motivated, whatever procedure is adopted a large percentage will give up their homosexuality. In this connection, public information is of the greatest importance. The misinformation spread by certain circles that 'homosexuality is untreatable by psychotherapy' does incalculable harm to thousands of men and women."

Fine, M.D.(1987)
Male and Female pp. 85-86
York Publishing

"In Masters and Johnson's reorientation therapy, the "failure rate" for treatment stood at 35 percent (65 percent success rate). This finding is of considerable theoretical importance and, of course, offers hope to those who desire reorientation therapy."

Carson, R.L. Butcher, J.N. and Modern Life.
8th n, J.C. (1988). Edition, P. 441
Scott Company

Dr. Reuben Fine is a prominent psychiatrist who has had significant experience in providing treatment for those struggling with homosexuality.

Masters and Johnson are recognized international experts on human sexuality. Carson, Butcher and Coleman are renowned clinicians and researchers. They have authored significant research papers and texts on various clinical topics.

“Can homosexuals change their orientation? The fact, reported in the literature, proves the possibility. I have seen some homosexuals in treatment – and have met more former homosexuals (including those who were exclusively so) – who now respond physically and emotionally as heterosexuals in successful marriages.”

John Harvey (1987)

The Homosexual Person in Keifer, J. (ed)

A Sharper Focus on Homosexuality, (p. 76)

San Francisco Ignatius Press

Father John Harvey is a Catholic Priest and psychotherapist who is the founder of Courage, a group whose focus is to help those with homosexual problems.

“With respect to orientation as homosexual or bisexual in the human species, there is no evidence that prenatal homornalization alone, independent of post natal history, inexorably preordains either orientation. Rather neonatal antecedents may facilitate the subsequent differentiation of a homosexual or bisexual orientation, provided the post natal determinants in the social and communicational history are also facilitative.”

John Money, Ph.D. (1988).

Gay Straight or In Between, p.50.

New York, Oxford University Press.

NOTE: (In more simple terms, Dr. John Money indicates there is no evidence that biological factors determine homosexuality and that whatever biologic factors might exist, are insufficient to determine a homosexual orientation.)

“...psychotherapy can resolve homosexual conflicts and orientation in the direction of heterosexuality and personal maturation.”

Ismond Rosen, M.D. in Fagen, P. (1988).

Hope for Homosexuality, page 43

Washington, D.C. The Center for Child & Family Policy
of the Free Congress Research & Education Foundation

Dr. Rosen is a psychiatrist who has had significant experience in providing treatment to those experiencing homosexual problem.

“Healing for the homosexual is entirely possible.”

Elizabeth Moberly, Ph.D. (1983)

Homosexuality, A New Christian Ethic

Greenwood, South Carolina: The Attic Press, Inc.

Dr. Moberly is a prominent researcher who has done extensive study of homosexuality. (12 November 1991).

March 11, 1992

Larry D. Washburn
Special Assistant
L.D.S Social Services
Director's Office
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

Dear Brother Washburn:

I would like to thank you for your response to my letter addressed to the First Presidency dated February 10, 1992.

In consideration of your letter of February 27, 1992, I am writing with some clarifications and definitions which seemed to elude your recognition as I read your response.

In writing the First Presidency, I was not, at the outset, seeking to remediate my homosexuality. Rather, my intention was quite the opposite. I was and am presently seeking to understand the conditions and prejudices which prevent the First Presidency and other Church Leaders from recognizing the verity of homosexuality as an inborn and innate condition. It is transparently obvious that at present, the popular opinion, not wholly unique to the Church and its hierarchy, presumes homosexuality to be a learned response to environment, upbringing and harshly generalized conditions.

It is in light of this offensive and bigoted ignorance that I wish to address more concisely the issues previously observed in my initial letter.

Allow me to preface my comments by making it absolutely certain in your mind that I do not believe that homosexuality is wrong, nor do I believe that the outlined policy of the Church holds validity, and that such policy is entirely based upon the skepticism and homophobia of a few certain men, frightened by the absence in scripture on this subject. The Lord Himself, during his entire ministry, did not make even slight reference to this now most controversial of subjects.

To me, this is indication and testimony enough to quench the voracity and zeal the Brethren exude when condemning 10% of the entire population. Their doctrine is founded in shallow understanding and ungodliness; stripped of validity when placed alongside the all-encompassing and eternal doctrine of Christ.

It is not without research that I make my accusations. It is known that President Spencer W. Kimball, Mark E. Peterson and others were amongst the few who concocted their anti-homosexuality policy. Indeed, it was in view of the fact that President Kimball had stumbled upon this issue in his preparations for the book, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* that he initiated the diabolical research and ensuing Church Policy on Homosexuality. Until such time, the Church had not sufficient need or means to draft such a policy. Of course other Brethren like Elder Boyd K. Packer have been known for their zealous battle against sexual sin. Their contributions to the perpetuation of the general ignorance and homophobia of the Church members on the subject of homosexuality remain invaluable to the leaders of the Church.

I recall the numerous General Conferences of the Church which featured these men, addressing the subject of sexual sin. Particularly I remember the vehemence with which they spoke against homosexuality, and other issues they felt related to such; (i.e., masturbation, etc.). Insipidity is proliferated by teaching youth that masturbation precedes, and even develops one's homosexuality, and discards the normal sexual exploration and development of understanding the self as sinful; s convenient excuse for ignorance. I recall how I felt when they quoted Prophets of God telling their sons that *they "would rather see them in a coffin than to be homosexual"* Can you imagine the horror I felt and others similarly situated in response to such comments and unfounded allegations?

Are the Church Leaders blind to the astronomical statistics of suicide amongst youth who cannot emotionally deal with their homosexuality? Do they not see the emotional and spiritual cruelty these men perpetuate in the name of Jesus Christ? The very Savior these helpless children turn to for direction, love and acceptance are told is condemning them for the emotions and feelings they innately and inconsequentially of their own actions retain.

This is the crime! This is the sin against God and nature! Neither you nor the leaders of the Church understand the immensity of pressure and guilt these youth feel. Neither do they, by virtue of their present actions and policies care about such rising mortality in gay and lesbian youth within the Church.

I do not expect, that, by this letter or a million alike, the foundation of the insipid policy on homosexuality will falter. Nor do I expect that such would commence its recall or renegotiation. Such a thought would be an insult to my intelligence and unfathomable to the Brethren.

The hierarchy of the Church, perpetuate the belief that homosexuality is learned and responsive to specific environments and conditions. Based on

this premise, is it not preposterous for that same hierarchy to believe that heterosexuality can be learned merely by changing the environment or conditions? Obviously it is not preposterous to the Brethren due to the fact that *"aversion therapy"*^N has been prominently utilized in *"conditioning a heterosexual response"*^N in homosexuals exposed by the BYU Gay and Lesbian Gestapo, a.k.a. BYU Standards. I hardly believe that the Lord Himself would have advocated any treatment, let alone shock therapy as a viable means to *"change"* his beloved children into being the *"acceptable"* and *"fully-functioning"* members of the Church the Brethren envision. Shock therapy is normally reserved as a last resort for extremely disturbed mental patients.

Nor would that same deity advocate medically altering one of His children, nor using *"injection aversion therapy"*; wherein the participant (under the belief that otherwise he/she must endure the eternal pains of hell) is made to view homo-erotic slides and upon arousal is injected with a substance designed to make the recipient violently vomit and endure excruciating abdominal pain. Such Nazi-like tactics deny the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and yet, the Brethren adopt them as a *"...successful means of changing those seeking to abandon the sins of homosexuality."* Or as you wrote *"...how homosexuality can be changed, and how it can be done the Lord's way."* I know the fear these participants are under. They are told that they must endure "aversion therapy" or they will be expelled from the institution, excommunicated or disfellowshipped from the Church and alienated by both family and Church members alike.

Therein lays the mockery of God. Suddenly the L.D.S. Social Services in conjunction with the Brethren become the eternal judges of the innocent. Where is the *"unconditional love"* or *"charity"* that *"never faileth"* in the cruelty thus demonstrated?

In San Francisco, there is a group of gay and lesbian members who have proclaimed themselves celibate and are accepted by the Brethren, so long

as they do not practice their homosexuality. Let us examine this further. I was told by President Merrill Higham of the San Francisco Stake that one can be a fully accepted member as long as one accepts a life of celibacy. In a careful examination of the words used in this offer it becomes apparent that homosexuality itself is abased because therein lies no ability to emotionally or physically express it.

Additionally, it indicates the assumption on the part of the Brethren that for 10% of the population celibacy is easily entered into. The Brethren are not those required to fill celibate shoes, and it would be most interesting to see them place such a sexual and emotional barrier upon themselves before issuing such conditions upon others.

By advocating celibacy, the Brethren also advocate the practice their own doctrines declare as contemptible and are a satanic institution of the Catholic Church. Why then, do they hypocritically propose such an institution to homosexuals in the Church? Is it, in this particular circumstance, not considered evil or contemptuous? Has their doctrine become flexible? One can safely assume under this premise that many, if not all, of the doctrines purported by the Brethren are questionable in their validity.

I briefly mentioned that scripturally there is a great absence of information with specific regard to homosexuality. It is known that Christ, even in Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenant writings, did not refer to or mention in slight the subject of homosexuality. Therefore, in an effort to substantiate the prejudiced policy, Mark E. Peterson, the master of scriptural evidence, was set to work on supporting the anti-homosexual policy. Indeed, it was not difficult for him to ascribe the ever-popular Sodom & Gomorra story, the references made by the Apostle Paul and in short, all of the seven biblical references. Interestingly, the research accomplished by the Church on each of these references is minimal and lacking.

Sodom & Gomorra's tale of woe culminates not in the populace of homosexuality, but in the mistreatment of strangers and the continual rape and pillage within the city limits. It is known, culturally speaking, that a stranger was an honored guest. It is also known that Lot was not allowed entrance to Sodom & Gomorra to preach against the wickedness, except under the deceitful pretenses that he was the brother of Sariah. Lot would have lost his life otherwise and they would have taken Sariah for sexual exploitative purposes. Therefore, it appears that heterosexuality and the inability of those heterosexual men to control their sexual improprieties sponsored the eventual downfall of the two cities rather than the "*rampant homosexuality*" theory.

Such misconstrued theories have deceived children and adults in Sunday school long enough. Their arguments lack consistency and doctrinal coherence. Yet, such deplorable stories are taught from one generation to the next, seemingly planned as it were, so that the perpetuation of misinformation and prejudice remains unchallenged.

In your letter you explain that, "*...we are convinced that there is hope for those who accurately understand the homosexual condition and want to make changes in their lives. We are seeing many whose lives are changed, and who experience the healing influence of the Gospel.*" With respect to this comment, I must make clear that the "we" you refer to are solely heterosexually oriented and opinionated men, convinced that there is hope for the homosexual to become heterosexual. Yet you do not understand the "*homosexual condition*"! If in fact you did understand the homosexual condition, such words would not have found their way into your letter! In addition, those who "*want to make changes in their lives*" simply find it easier to live within the confines of the Church laws as a heterosexual than a homosexual due to the extreme ostracism they experience as a homosexual.

If one truly believes, as many mistakenly do, that they will be damned for accepting their homosexuality and living according to that which is innately given them, then it follows suit that they would seek what you call the *"healing influence of the Gospel"*. I would not, however, consider shock therapy nor is the biased consortium of psychologists in the L.D.S. Social services to be a viable *"healing influence"*. The ineptness of the L.D.S. Social Services evident in the tactics and psychological prescriptions exuded. Indeed, they would be considered a *"step back in time"* in comparison to leading psychologists and psychiatrists in the field today. Otherwise, they would realize that homosexuality is indeed a normal, healthy and viable orientation.

Understandably, (considering the obvious fact that the L.D.S. Social Services is inseparably connected to the *"hierarchy"* of the Church, and is subject to its precepts and policies), one cannot expect to discover contradicting facts and current findings in psychiatry in the policies and procedures of the L.D.S. Social Services. Thus, the services rendered are questionable and faulty at best. From personal experience with Brother Michael Todd in British Columbia I can attest to the inadequacies of the L.D.S. Social Services.

In the world of psychiatry, there is a publication called the DSMR-3. This publication lists the universal diagnosis for all known psychiatric conditions, as well as the most current prescriptions to deal with the problems. Homosexuality was taken off the list of diagnosis 10 years ago. Since then, it has also been revised three additional times; each revision primarily addressing homosexuality and eradicating it as a psychiatric condition for treatment. Enclosed with your letter were several quotations of known psychologists and psychiatrists, among which were several quotes from Dr. Nicolosi. In Dr. Nicolosi's terms, *"homosexual identity can never be completely ego-syntonic"*. By this he means that one can never be truly happy within themselves. Those approaching him or other more reputable psychiatrists in a dystonic state, that is, unhappy with

their homosexuality, desire to change their dystonic state into an syntonic state; which is to say, going from discouraged and unhappy, to encouraged and happy.

Interestingly, other noted psychiatrists comment that most often it is because the homosexual had not accepted their homosexuality that they experienced unhappiness or a dystonic state of being. Once they came "*out of the closet*" their happiness returned and goes on to enjoy meaningful, productive lives and lasting, fulfilling relationships.

These same psychiatrists also note that in such cases where rape or sexual violation by the same sex was involved, working through the emotional ramifications of such incidents leads to the eradication of the perceived homosexuality. This indicates that the individual was heterosexual, but had endured a homosexual experience considered unnatural to their orientation. That is to say, they did not accept their perceived homosexuality because they did not innately feel it. Therefore, unhappy with their perceived homosexual tendencies or feelings, they are dystonic. Those patients are not heterosexual because they were cured of homosexuality but because their dystonic state was cured by means of identifying the incident as a violation of their heterosexuality, which created identity uncertainties. These uncertainties are clarified and dealt with to bring the patient to a state of ego-syntonicity or happiness within themselves. This is not "*curing*" the homosexual which, in part, is the argument given by Dr. Nicolosi.

Dr. Nicolosi has been on several talk shows, Larry King Live and others, advocating his books and lectures, as well as soliciting his professional services to those dealing with their ego-dystonicity. Yet he purports to have "*success*" in "*curing*" his completely homosexual clients. If one considers accentuating heterosexuality in bisexual men or working through ego-dystonic states with homosexual rape victims, a success, then success in one's mind is meager and misrepresented. In his

appearance on Larry King Live, it was noted by another guest also appearing on the same show that 99% of the cases in which Dr. Nicolosi has dealt with his completely homosexual clients (those absent of any. heterosexual desire) within five years of their "*cure*" they have completely revert back to their homosexuality. Is that to be considered success? I believe that Dr. Nicolosi has greatly overestimated his abilities and finds the drive to eradicate homosexuality within his own severe homophobia. Such great dedication to change the homosexual orientation in others indicates instability in Dr. Nicolosi with regard to his sexual identity.

That the L.D.S. Social Service supports Dr. Nicolosi is in my opinion, a further indication of the inept and biased services it renders. Summarily, I think it futile for purposes intended for me to remonstrate further against Dr. Nicolosi's alleged "*curative*" processes. Therefore may it suffice that Dr. Nicolosi, amongst your other listed professionals, cannot "*re-invent the wheel*" or recreate established facts accepted by the rest of the world of psychiatry, without being considered "*in the dark*" on such issues of great controversy and debate.

I am grateful that you have taken the time to read this letter. May I reiterate my intent of writing was not to attempt authorship on the reconsideration of Church policy on homosexuality, and such would be the most compassionate.

Rather, my writing is in response to your letter, which seemed to change my initial contact with the First Presidency for answers into a letter indicating a desire for my homosexual remediation. I do not desire to change who I am, nor should you try to change who I am, nor should anyone try to change who anyone is as they have been created. We must all individually accept ourselves as the wonderful and colorful creations that we are which differences glorify God. We must allow the Gospel of Christ to develop in us the charitable love and non-

judgmental acceptance of others for who they are, not for what we would like them to be.

I believe that it is abuse of the Gospel of Christ to manipulate and condition others into accepting what a few men purport as the Lord's desire; when in actuality it is quite clearly the opposite of the Lord's desire.

Perhaps it is merely a case of rationale in the method, the Church utilizes in dealing with homosexuality. It is important to remember, however, that prejudice will always parade as rationale until it is exposed.

Again, thank you for your time and may God bless you and yours.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Olson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

cc: The First Presidency (w/enclosures)
President Merrill Higham (w/enclosures)

LDS Social Services

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

March 19, 1992

Dear Brother Ogden:

Thank you for your letter clarifying your position on homosexuality. We do not agree with your premise that homosexuality is exclusively inborn and innate, but recognize there are others who feel as you do.

The Church position on standards of morality and fidelity was recently restated in a letter to all members of the Church issued November 14, 1991.

To quote in part from that letter: *"We call upon all members to renew their commitment to live the Lord's standard of moral conduct. Parents should teach their children the sacred nature of procreative powers and instill in them a desire to be chaste in thought and deed. A correct understanding of the divinely appointed roles of men and women will fortify all against sinful practices. Our only real safety, physically and spiritually, lies in keeping the Lord's commandments."*

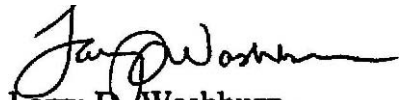
The Lord's law of moral conduct is abstinence outside of lawful marriage and fidelity within marriage. Sexual relations are proper only between husband and wife appropriately expressed within the bonds of marriage. Any other sexual contact, including fornication, adultery, and homosexual and lesbian behavior, is sinful. Those who persist in such practices or who influence others to do so are subject to Church discipline.

"...There is a distinction between immoral thoughts and feelings and participating in either immoral heterosexual or homosexual behavior. However, such thoughts and feelings, regardless of their causes, can and should be overcome and sinful behavior should be eliminated. This can be achieved through faith in God, sincere repentance, and persistent effort...we plead for those involved in such behavior to forsake it. We love them and pray for them."

The letter then talks about the *"atoning and healing power of the Savior"* and refers members to Isaiah 53:4-5 and Mosiah 4:2-3.

We understand that you do not agree with this position. Regardless, we do appreciate your letter to us, and hope the very best for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry D. Washburn', with a stylized, flowing script.

Larry D. Washburn
Special Assistant

April 17, 1992

The First Presidency
Church Office Building
47 E. South Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

Dear Brethren:

I am writing to request the removal of my name from all records of the Church, and copies or originals of same to be mailed to me, as I no longer wish to be affiliated with the Mormon Church in any capacity.

I have been in continual correspondence with Larry Washburn, Special Assistant to the First Presidency, with regard to my homosexuality, which I know to be inborn and innate. This is apparently disputed by Mr. Washburn who seems to believe he knows more about being homosexual than a homosexual. Neither Mr. Washburn nor the Church can provide sufficient evidence nor scriptural support to consider homosexuality a mere choice. 10% of the world or 800,000 of the Mormon Church members are Gay or Lesbian, NOT by their own choice. Those who believe otherwise are afraid of the viable existence of homosexuality, and are greatly uneducated. Within the very policies issued to the members of the Church by the First Presidency, there are great contradictions and inadequacies.

You condemn celibacy as a great and abominable practice of the Catholic Church, yet for Gay and Lesbian members of the Church, celibacy is vehemently advocated. In this very example, you acknowledge the verity of the innate feelings and emotions of homosexuality. Yet, officially you deny any elusion to the innateness of those same feelings and emotions. Perhaps the Gospel is more flexible than it is presented to be in Sunday school? It is a feeble dogma that teaches the perpetuation of homophobia

and bigotry through the utilization of inept education. It is a disturbed and inept theology that purports specific ignorance as credible, human intolerance, female subjugation, incessant pro-creation and white supremacy as the "accepted roles for men and women"^N.

The Church Social Services is a supreme example of the most preposterous delusion of psychiatry I have ever encountered. Their exclusion of the DSM3-R, known as the "*psychiatric bible*" shows the inadequacy of this cantankerous collection of calamitous counselors to grasp the very basics in psychiatry.

Were the Mormon Church to live by their own objectives, (*i.e. charity, tolerance, patience, equality*) I believe there would be great dissent from the Church due to the extreme corruption within the membership and the distortion of truth from the hierarchy. I cannot support leaders that pummel voraciously the homosexual youth to the point of self-desertion and suicide. I cannot support leaders who "*prayerfully handle*" millions of dollars in tithing utilized to shroud the Church's myths of reality. I am ashamed to have wasted two years of my life soliciting a twisted gospel of Christ, which I fervently had hoped would "*cure*" my homosexuality.

I know the Lord has led me to accept my homosexuality. You would perhaps shun this as satanic influence and easily discount my spiritual and emotional journey. Not one of you three, Gordon B. Hinkley, Thomas S. Monson or Ezra Taft Benson, has taken the time to personally address my questions and inquiries. How easy it is for you to shrug me from your shoulders because I choose to confront you with issues which leave you uncomfortable. Why do they leave you with discomfort - because you have not dealt with them fairly. In each word of policy, in each breath uttered, in every reference to homosexuality, your homophobic instincts tell you that we as homosexuals were not born this way, but simply chose to feel it. You believe somehow we are

all born straight. Why then are there Blacks, Mexicans or Japanese but not homosexuals? Homosexuality transcends all races, all creeds and all nations, for all recorded history. You cannot deny this as surely as you cannot deny Christ himself. God glorifies himself with diversity. That is in your doctrine. Therefore, I beseech you to further advance your intelligence to envelope the fact of homosexuality. If the glory of God is intelligence, why then do you mock it by allowing partial intelligence to exist in his Church?

Perhaps my words again shall fall on deaf ears. As it is said, one will only hear that which one will hear vehemence in writing and confronting you with these issues is to attempt to save thousands of souls from the unfounded belief that their salvation rests in being born or "choosing to become" straight. That belief is not conducive to the Gospel of Christ. As well, I write out of the hope that you will recognize how many individuals endure the pains of hell on Earth, how many youth commit suicide and how many thousands of innocent victims live with the fear of going to hell as a result of this diabolical ostracism you administer. I pray that you will, with charitable intentions, seek to resolve the controversy surrounding homosexuality through the remediation of current Church Policy on homosexuality.

May I reiterate my simple request that one of the First Presidency, whom I originally addressed, respond to this letter as soon as possible, and, that my name be stricken from the records of the Church with copies or originals of all documents sent to my home.

I am grateful for your time. As a professional I can appreciate your schedules. I eagerly await your response.

Very truly yours,

Steven R. Ogden

LDS Social Services

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

50 East North Temple Street

Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

May 7, 1992

Dear Brother Ogden:

The First Presidency has asked that I respond to your recent letter. I have reviewed the past correspondence between you and Larry Washburn, and Brother Washburn has mentioned also that you recently telephoned.

I know these matters you speak of are not simple or easy to understand. I also sensed in your letter a feeling of sincerity along with frustration. While we understand your view of homosexuality and respect your right to have such a view, there are others who offer a different perspective. Specifically, there is a body of research which concludes that those who struggle with homosexual difficulties can be helped. We have many examples of individuals who have made significant changes in their lives. This seems to be particularly possible when there is a desire to make these changes and where appropriate assistance is available.

I am sure you are aware that there is a resurgence of interest in the area and credible research is being conducted. The researcher, Dr. John Money, referencing his extensive research, states that biological influences are insufficient to determine a homosexual identity. Factors occurring after birth clearly contribute to a homosexual orientation.

Although the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have taken political stands regarding

homosexuality, the current manual continues to make allowance for those who wish to seek assistance. While we know that such struggles are not easy, we do know that healing can come when we seek help in the Lord's Way.

Brother Ogden, we know that there are those who struggle with homosexual difficulties and we are willing to do what we can to help. Many of our own staff has received specialized training and a recent publication distributed to priesthood leaders offers suggestions in understanding and assisting those with homosexual struggles.

May I convey to you the concern and interest of The First Presidency as you struggle with these issues in your life.

The request to have your name removed from the membership records of the Church is a local matter handled by your bishop. You may wish to visit with him about your request.

Please let us know if we can help further.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harold C. Brown".

Harold C. Brown

Commissioner LDS Social Services

cc: Office of the First Presidency Larry Washburn

May 12, 1992

Mr. Harold C. Brown
Commissioner
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

Dear Mr. Brown:

I would like to thank you for your letter of May 7, 1992, and wish to clarify my position with regard to my letter of recent to the First Presidency.

While I agree that there may be sincerity within the language of my correspondence, may it also be recognized that such language in no way, shape or form should be or can be misconstrued to infer a sense of disinterest, internal questioning or in any manner a desire to reorient my homosexual orientation. As I reiterated to Mr. Washburn, which correspondence you have reviewed, I do not wish for anyone to misread my intentions. May it serve my purposes to reiterate again, I am, always have been and always will be gay and proudly so. There are no cures for homosexuality as such an orientation is a viable and healthy, natural orientation. It is not a lifestyle, choice, selection, and deviation, contradiction of nature, contrivance, preference or social endeavor.

Your comment that, "*...there is a body of research which concludes that those who struggle with homosexual difficulties can be helped*", eludes to the preposterous conclusion that somehow homosexuality itself is difficult. I disagree in the sense that homosexuality itself is not the perpetrator of difficulty, but the ostracism administered by the Church. Interestingly noted in the following paragraph you note homosexuality as an

orientation. This is in direct contradiction to the official policy on homosexuality the Church presently sustains. They consider homosexuality a "*choice*^N or "*preference*" or "*lifestyle*". Such words elicit homosexuality as being nothing more than a proverbial "fork in the road" of life.

Such a view is indicative of intolerance, homophobia and a persistent fear of reality when one considers that almost all homosexuals know by age three or four that experienced homosexual orientation existed. Top psychiatrists also note that, " . . . one does not "socialize" or "savvy"^N into homosexuality." Some homosexuals choose to live a celibate lifestyle, others marry. Interestingly however, 90% of those who do marry sublimate their homosexuality at some point during the course of their marriage. Others are known to "closet" their orientation until after their spouse is deceased.

I think it worthy to note that research delving into the treatment and eventual eradication of homosexuality portrays the intolerance and bigotry that both society and the Church retain. You inferred this when you considered your work a "*healing . . . in the Lord's Way*". I cannot conceive of a more blasphemous line of heresy than this. The Lord spoke nothing of homosexuality. The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke not a syllable on the subject of homosexuality. It remains Church History that the diabolical Church Policy on Homosexuality was a contrivance by Spencer W. Kimball and Mark E. Peterson in their cooperative effort on "The Miracle of Forgiveness".

Concerning your reference to Dr. John Money, may it suffice to refer to my previous observations that one does not intellectualize or socialize into homosexuality? There are no congruencies from one case to the next which would offer substantial consistencies indicative of such a generalization. It is a pity that Dr. Money expends his years of training in such a hypocritical endeavor. Simply by your reference to his research,

which includes the support of biological contributions, you again provide a contradiction between you and the Church Policy. (See Washburn letter of March 19, 1992)

The resurgence of interest in homosexual foundations which you mentioned, I believe, generates from an internal and perpetual conditioning of homophobia within the Church literature. Manuals upon manuals express the Church's vehement lashing of this viable human orientation. The leaders refer to homosexuality as "*sick*", "*ugly*" and "*repugnant*". How is the young L.D.S. homosexual to interpret such references but on a personal level. These innocent youth begin considering themselves to be "*sick*", "*sinful*" and "*repugnant*", because that is what they are taught to believe and Mom and Dad are "*never wrong*".

And so, the saga continues unabated. The Brethren administer their bigotry and homophobia with its resulting statistics of youth suicide. The blood will not wash from their hands with one trip to the temple. The Lord himself will exact from them the travesty they perpetuate from one generation to the next. If any issue warrants immediate attention, it is that of incest, wife beating and rape within the Church. Of course you will never see the astounding and revealing statistics of such practices in the Church News!

These are "*hushed*" by Church Leaders as though they do not exist. Some Church Leaders go so far as to infer that homosexuals are child molesters, where it is fact that 99% of all child molestation is by straight men with little girls. Now you tell me that heterosexuality and Mormonism is so infallible! And yet, this is the image the Church portrays!

For your future reference, The American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association do not make *"political decisions"*. The current manual you refer to is known as the DSM-3-R. All three of its revisions address homosexuality for the sole purpose to educate psychiatrists and psychologists in new findings and factual evidence on the subject. The *"assistance"* you refer to is clearly addressed in my letter to Mr. Washburn of March 11, 1992, page 6. Therein I make it clear-that when one is not happy with their homosexuality (or are in a dystonic state of being) and seek therapy, it is because they have not *"come to terms"* with their homosexuality. This is known as *"coming out of the closet"*. Once they do so, they go on to enjoy a happy and rewarding life (or a syntonic state of being). This is substantiated by both institutions previously noted.

In the future, please do not synonymously utilize *"homosexuality"* with *"difficulty"* as they are not intrinsically related. The *"difficulty"* homosexuals may or may not experience comes solely from homophobia and ostracism aptly exhibited by the Mormon Church. Both you and the Church have an eager blindness to this subject which is incongruent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ that you both purport to uphold! Such inconsistencies between you bring these incoherencies into public view. I am ashamed that I was a contributor to such a diabolical caricature of Christ's doctrine and remain amused by the Church's careful avoidance of the subject of homosexuality. It appears as some sick kind of *déjà vu* from the seventies before Mr. Kimball experienced his timely, convenient and politically appropriate revelation on the Priesthood and African Americans.

Essentially, Mr. Brown, it is obvious that you retain the same views and beliefs of Mr. Washburn and the Church. I understand, and I even accept that you believe differently. I cannot, however, allow the continual suffering of homosexuals by bigoted and hypocritical heterosexuals to go unheeded. Our own country does not acknowledge the homosexuals who

died alongside Jews and Catholics in the holocaust. Neither do they acknowledge that much of the greatest art, music and other great contributions to human culture they enjoy were made by homosexuals. Yet, eagerly these same bastards will subjugate them, ostracize them and punish them for something they have no control over.

I cannot blame you for being straight. I cannot and will not sustain prejudice against heterosexuals in any manner, and yet I am made to tolerate the "*good ole' boys*" methodology simply because of the way I was born. Such prejudice is unfounded and uncharitable.

I will herewith suspend all correspondence with the Church and any representatives thereof and pray that you and others alike will open your eyes and open your heart to the reality of this and many other issues.

Very truly yours,



Steven R. Ogden

May 13, 1992

President Merrill F. Higham
San Francisco California Stake

Dear President Higham:

First allow me to thank you for your continued interest and patience regarding my inquiries to the First Presidency and correspondence with you concerning my membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and my homosexuality.

While I understand there are great differences of belief about homosexuality and its origin between the Church and myself, I cannot understand the rationale for the inconsistencies and contradictions which pervade their policy. I have clearly pointed out to the Brethren through continual correspondence with them that the policy is unfounded, save in extreme prejudice and ignorance. All that their "specialists" can offer to me are meaningless and insubstantial quotes from those as homophobic as themselves. I have submitted to them a great amount of considerably substantive evidence and materials to support the verity that homosexuality is indeed not a "*preference*", "*lifestyle*" or "*free-agent choice*", but a biologically determined and normal human condition worthy of a more dignified address. I have touched, I believe, a subject and sensitivity that they are not readily able to acknowledge based upon their ignorance and bias. This has led me to believe that a great deal of reality is missing from their admonitions and teachings given to the Saints. Such a lack of correct education is hardly indicative, as I have previously stated, of those who profess that "*the glory of God is intelligence*".

I cannot, with the present knowledge I retain concerning homosexuality and its true origin and viable human condition, allow myself to continue as a contributing member of the Church. I do not uphold the First

Presidency, the Apostles, the Seventy, the General Authorities nor other Church Leaders as an administration. I have great respect for them as people and hope that as humans on no greater level than I, they will address these imperative issues of their own volition before they are obligated by society at large.

Again, please send me written confirmation of the removal of my name from the Church records, or, as you indicated, conclude the excommunication process as quickly as possible.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Osden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Osden".

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Merrill F. Higham
Stake President
San Francisco California Stake

May 19, 1992

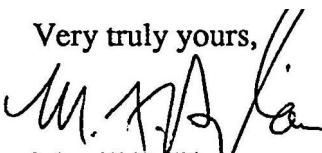
Dear Brother Ogden:

As we have discussed the Stake Presidency is considering formal disciplinary action against you, including the possibility of excommunication, because of your continued involvement in conduct unbecoming a member of the Church.

You are invited to attend this disciplinary council to give your response and, if you wish, to provide witnesses or other evidence in your behalf.

The disciplinary council will be held on June 7, 1992 at 9:30 AM in the Stake High Center at 975 Sneath Lane, San Bruno, California.

If you plan to attend kindly call me at work or at home.

Very truly yours,

Merrill F. Higham
Stake President

May 20, 1992

San Francisco California Stake Presidency
c/o President Merrill F. Higham
San Francisco California Stake

Dear Brethren of the Disciplinary Council:

I am sure that you have been made carefully aware of the correspondence and communications I shared between President Higham, LDS Social Services Special Assistant Larry Washburn, LDS Church Commissioner Harold Brown and myself since December 1991.

I am also quite sure that you have been briefed by President Higham regarding the circumstances surrounding this matter; specifically, the acceptance of my homosexuality and my subsequent disenchantment with the Church on many levels. I do not agree with the current Church Policy on Homosexuality with its origin and administration. The Church has, with its creation of such a policy, instigated a seemingly impervious doctrine consisting of outdated and dilapidated psychology. They have haphazardly decorated their unfounded homophobic and discriminatory policy with indefensible and insubstantial scripture.

It is beyond comprehension that the Brethren, in direct contradiction to the foundation of the doctrines they profess to exhort and uphold, advocate: A) The perpetuation of significant ostracism of homosexuals with its subsequent mental trauma and, in many cases, suicide; B) The subjugation of women through the Women's Role As Homemaker" conditioning practices evident in Relief Society and Young Women's teaching manuals, activities and programs; C) Misogyny by virtue of the aforementioned and in addition their continual ignorance of and light discipline for rape, incest and wife-beating within the Church by Church Leaders; D) The "cover-up" of misspent tithing funds "*prayerfully spent*"

on forged Joseph Smith documents, Church Leadership retreats, subsidy of over-indulgent Church Leaders, investment in unnecessary corporations and lands and thousands of other questionable practices; E) The holocaustic-type therapy inflicted on homosexuals exposed by the BYU Standards Gestapo or "*gay-baiters*", etc.

Beyond the submission of personal materials to both prove and support the viability of homosexuality as a human condition not a choice, I have provided information, unknown to the Brethren due to their lack of knowledge on the subject, and materials which not only refute such an inhuman policy and expose its infantile origination, but substantially eradicate the validity in perpetuating such ancient juvenility and insipidity. Homosexuality is not and has never been a matter of revelatory debate as there has never been a revelation on the subject of homosexuality. Both Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith have never chronicled any opinion nor gospel doctrine on the subject which concerns over 10% of the entire human race! I believe such an immense disqualifier should not be given as much discounting as that which is portrayed by the Church.

I do not, by my remarks, expect that any of you will accept that which I have shown to be true, as I realize that we do not share the basic truth that homosexuality is innate and inborn. Therefore I write merely to seek an opening of your minds, a furthering of the truth, which, as the scriptures attest, shall make you free. It is a pitiful stance one takes when he cannot exude charitable acceptance of those born outside of white male heterosexuality. How little is the knowledge you possess on the subject of homosexuality and yet how great are the punishments and condemnations you make against it. How unlearned you are in human nature and yet how great your assumptions of the nature of homosexuality. Ignorance begets assumptions, assumptions beget hate, hate begets violence and such ignorant violence begets death.

For decades the white race turned their heads when they saw the "*good ole' boys*" tearing down the road to go and "*kill them some niggers . . .*" Now, we are seeing a rekindling of this intolerance and bigotry as we, being homosexual, are made to endure hate crimes and death being administered by your sons who want to go, "*kill them some faggots . . .*" And, as has gone unchanged to this day, more innocent people are killed as a result of the intolerance for differences nature herself has authored. None of you are aware of how many hundreds of thousands of homosexuals were slaughtered alongside Jews and Catholics by the Nazis in World War II.

Straight white male America has conveniently overlooked much of the truth that has occurred in its history so that it may, in its bigoted fashion, perpetuate the ignorance and prejudice which pervades the hearts of "*so-called*" Christians.

The Rodney King trials demonstrate not that the inner cities need more familial values, but that the administration of this government, whose principles are as conservatively similar to the Church's, are ineptly addressing the needs of the minorities. Homosexuality is a minority as are African Americans, as are Hispanics, as are Chinese, as are all ethnicities under the extreme subjugation and rule of the straight white male. It was not the African American who traversed across the oceans to enslave the White man. It was not the American Indian who slaughtered and stole from the White man. It is not the female who seeks to dominate and control the male body and the male free-agency to choose for himself. You, who advocate the utilization and teach the principles of the power of free-agency, militantly seek to gain control over an individual's opportunity to exercise that free-agency.

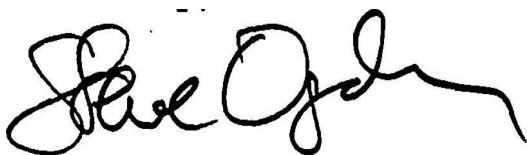
It is a game of power and control of the minority by the straight White male without proper address to ethnic, cultural and orientation issues involved which contributes to such indolence, homelessness, joblessness

and violence in the streets of America.

It is with an angered heart and an open mind that I address you with these words. The blood of the innocent children who are born Gay or Lesbian who commit suicide as a result of the extreme ostracism and condemnation from the Church Administration is upon all those who will not change their hearts and minds. Your garments will not be washed clean through the blood of the Lamb of God when you eagerly blind yourself to these issues. If you feel discomfort with my words, remember how uncomfortable the Pharisees and Sadducees felt when Christ chastised them for their hypocrisy. I know the Lord lives, and as he lives so shall I testify that you are wrong in your assumptions on homosexuality. You have been wrong and will continue to be wrong unless and until you open your hearts and minds to the truth that homosexuality is not wrong.

For the facts I have hereby stated and that which I have previously stated, I must leave the Church preferably by my own volition, not by the "*discipline*" of those who are uneducated enough to assess the facts correctly. Indeed were the facts correctly examined it would be you in my position and I would be exercising punishment upon you. However, it is not my position to exact punishment from you. That is the Lord's position, and I am grateful for that.

Therefore, I request that my name is either removed from the records of the church or, that I am excommunicated promptly upon the commencement of your council. I do not wish to be contacted by the Church further, until a resolve is made to remediate the abhorrent and abominable practice of prejudices exuded currently by the Mormon Church.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Olson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Merrill F. Higham
Stake President
San Francisco California Stake

July 2, 1992

Dear Brother Ogden:

As you know, the Disciplinary Council comprised of the High Council and Stake Presidency of the San Francisco Stake met on June 7, 1992 to consider your status as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Based on the evidence, it was the decision of the Council that you be excommunicated for conduct contrary to the laws and order of the Church.

Please accept this letter as your official notification of the decision. If you wish to appeal this decision you have thirty days to do so. A letter should be addressed to the First Presidency and should specify the errors or unfairness in the procedures or decision. Please send the letter to me and I will forward it to the First Presidency along with our report on the Disciplinary Council. Brother Ogden, we urge you to re-examine your life and take the steps necessary to be worthy to be rebaptised. If at any time you would like to discuss that or any other issue ease knows that we truly care.

Kindest regards



Merrill F. Higham
STAKE PRESIDENT